

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUREAU STAMPE 1913-21
No. W.S. 1215

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.
STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,215

Witness

Joseph Killeen,
Abbeyview,
Ferns,
Co. Wexford.

Identity.

Vice-Commandant 3rd Battalion
North Wexford Brigade, 1920 - .

Subject.

Ferns Company, Irish Volunteers,
Co. Wexford, 1918-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2533

Form B.S.M. 2

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STATEMENT BY MR. JOSEPH KILLEEN,
Abbeyview, Ferns, Co. Wexford.

I was born in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary. I was educated at the Irish Christian Brothers School, Clonmel, and remained there until I reached sixth standard. At the age of fourteen, I was appointed Boy Telegraph Messenger in the Clonmel Post Office, which position I held for almost four years and was then appointed Acting Postman. After a short time, I was transferred to Ballymacarberry, Co. Waterford. I joined the local company of the Irish Volunteers under the late Michael Ó Riain. After about nine months, I was transferred as Acting Postman to Ballybrophy, Co. Leix. I was here for about another nine months and was then transferred to Fethard, Co. Tipperary. While in Fethard, I acted as Intelligence Officer to the local Volunteer Company.

One Sunday evening, we attended a football match in Killenaule and we carried the tricolour. The R.I.C. came along and tried to take it from us. The R.I.C. drew their batons and we attacked them with stones and anything we could get. The R.I.C. retired to their barrack and came out again, armed with carbines. They were in the act of firing on us when the parish priest, the Very Rev. Fr. Humphries, came on the scene and dissuaded them from doing so. We returned home with our flag.

In September, 1918, having spent about eleven months in Fethard, I was transferred to Ferns, Co. Wexford as Postman. After a short time here, I was approached by Tom Roche who asked me to join the Irish Republican

Brotherhood. I agreed to do so, and T^xim swore me in. He was Centre of the Ferns Circle. There were about thirty members of the Circle, including, Patrick Ronan, Martin Dunbar, Myles Breen, John Kelly (Clonee), Patrick Kenny, (Ballycarney), John O'Connor, (Kilthomas), Robert Kinsella (Kiltown), John Sinnott (Ferns), George Butler (Newtown). Shortly after this, I joined the Ferns Company of the Irish Volunteers. This was known as A. Company, 3rd Battalion, North Wexford Brigade. The late Owen Redmond was Captain at the time, and Mylie Breen was 1st Lieutenant. I was appointed Company I.O. and instructed not to attend any parades. However, I helped to organise other companies and, when Dáil Éireann was established and the Volunteers became the Irish Republican Army, I administered the oath to other companies.

At this time, Mylie Breen was Company Captain as, some time previously, Owen Redmond had been appointed to the Battalion Staff. Numerous raids for arms took place all over the Battalion area, and a large number of shotguns was obtained.

Sometime in 1920, Mylie Breen was appointed O/C of the Battalion. Patrick Ronan, Ferns, was Battalion Adjutant, and John Lawless, Leskinfore, was Quartermaster.

In November, 1920, I was appointed Vice Commandant of the Battalion. The companies forming the Battalion were:-

- | | | | |
|----|---------|---|--------------|
| A. | Company | - | Ferns |
| B. | " | - | Camolin |
| C. | " | - | Ballygarrett |
| D. | " | - | Killanerin |

D. Company	-	Castletown
F. "	-	Riverchapel
G. "	-	Gorey
H. "	-	Cologue
I. "	-	Oulart
J. "	-	Boolavogue
K. "	-	Monageer.

All my spare time from this on till the Truce was spent visiting the companies, supervising the training and perfecting the organisation. Military activities in the Battalion area increased considerably. These included the sniping of R.I.C., blocking of roads and cutting of telephone communications.

The North Wexford Brigade Active Service Unit was formed about December, 1920. This unit has been generally called the Flying Column. Mylie Breen was appointed to take over command of it, but he continued to be Battalion O/C as well. As he spent most of his time with the Column, the greater part of his duties as Battalion O/C fell on me.

I attended meetings of the Brigade Council which were held about once a month at Camolin. These were presided over by the Brigade O/C, Joseph Cummins (since deceased), and were attended by the other officers of the Brigade Staff and by the Commandants of the various Battalions. At these meetings, reports were submitted concerning the organisation and activities in the different battalion areas. We received orders concerning operations to be carried out against the enemy.

I was constantly in touch with the Column and

notified the local companies when the Column was going into their areas and the purpose of the visit. I also instructed the companies to supply Volunteers to act as guides and to arrange for the feeding and accommodation of the Column while in their areas, and also to supply guards and outposts for the Column while it rested. I must say that, in this connection, I always received the enthusiastic co-operation of all the Companies.

In May, 1921, I took charge of a party which attacked a composite patrol of six R.I.C. and Black and Tans in Ferns. A Sergeant of the R.I.C. was in charge of the patrol. I had with me four members of the Column. They were Stephen Pender, William Kavanagh, Tom (Lundy) Dwyer and, I think, Har Connors. We took up position behind a dead wall in the Main Street of Ferns and about fifty yards from the R.I.C. Barrack. I was armed with a .45 revolver and five rounds of ammunition. The other men in the party also had revolvers and a few home-made hand-grenades. The patrol approached in single file on both sides of the street. When they came opposite our position, we opened fire on them and threw some grenades. The enemy fired at us and also used grenades, and retreated to their barrack, firing as they went. When they reached the barrack, they continued firing for some considerable time, and also sent up Verey lights. We suffered no casualties. I heard later that some of the

enemy were wounded.

On a few occasions, I took charge of a party from the Ferns Company and sniped the local barrack.

SIGNED: Joseph Killeen
(Joseph Killeen)

DATE: 19. 7. 53

19.7.53

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BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1215

WITNESS: Sean Brennan Lieut. Col.
(Sean Brennan) Lieut.- Col.